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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 001440

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR OURISMAN TO ST. LUCIA: ARTICLE 98,
INVESTMENTS, BIODIVERSITY, AND ATA BOMB EQUIPMENT

REF: BRIDGETOWN 01339

Classified By: A/DCM Clyde Howard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador's October 17-19 trip to St. Lucia was highlighted by a positive meeting with PM King that helped move our Article 98 agenda forward. In addition, the Ambassador's presentation of USD 2 million to the OECS for a biodiversity grant and USD 39,000 worth of DSATA bomb technician equipment to the Royal St. Lucian Police Force were well received by local media capturing the spirit of the June Conference on the Caribbean. The visit confirmed St. Lucia's continued productive partnership with the USG in the Caribbean. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador visited St. Lucia from October 17-19 in conjunction with a grant-signing between USAID and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), as well as the donation of USD 39,000 worth of DS/ATA bomb technician equipment to the Royal St. Lucia Police Force (RSLPF). While in St. Lucia, the Ambassador met with PM Stephenson King and Tourism Minister Allen Chastanet. In addition to the Ambassador's meetings, the DCM met with Minister for Commerce and Trade Guy Mayers and opposition leader Dr. Kenny Anthony.

ARTICLE 98

¶3. (C) In her first meeting with PM King since his appointment on September 9, the Ambassador said the signing of an Article 98 agreement would be an important signal of the new government's commitment to our bilateral relationship. King appeared to be unaware of previous requests for the signing of Article 98, but expressed interest in moving forward. Post later confirmed that King is still actively pursuing Article 98 with his Cabinet. According to Post contacts in the PM's office, the Foreign Ministry was to present article 98 to Cabinet in its November 15 meeting, but that meeting was cancelled. Despite this, Article 98 remains on the agenda for upcoming meetings.

JUNE DELIVERABLES

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador discussed with King three deliverables from the June Conference on the Caribbean: the USD 2 million biodiversity grant from USAID to the OECS, the

Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between CARICOM and the United States, and the Science and Technology Agreement. In a follow-on meeting with Commerce Minister Mayers, DCM Fisher also discussed the potential TIFA and Science and Technology Agreement. Mayers was particularly interested in pushing the TIFA through CARICOM and asked for a copy of the draft TIFA.

15. (C) King also raised the importance of the criminal deportee issue to St. Lucia and CARICOM, particularly in the areas of notification, reintegration, and monitoring. The Ambassador stated that the President has heard this message loud and clear, hence the pilot programs in the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Guyana. She also noted that domestic reintegration programs, such as the new program in Barbados (ref), would provide important partnership opportunities for any potential future programs.

GRANTS RECEIVE POSITIVE PRESS

16. (U) On October 18, the Ambassador signed a grant agreement through which USAID will contribute USD 2 million to the OECS in support of biodiversity projects throughout the region. Government and OECS officials expressed sincere gratitude to the United States for the grant, which received ample positive attention in local media. The Ambassador and other officials also agreed on the need for long-term partners in implementing projects emerging from this grant, alongside local partners such as the University of the West Indies.

17. (U) The Ambassador also presented USD 39,000 worth of DS/ATA bomb technician equipment to the RSLPF. Deputy Commissioner Hermengild Francis accepted the equipment,

thanking the United States for its continued friendship and for the 2006 construction of barracks in Vieux Fort for the Special Services Unit. Assistant Superintendent Brian Jawahir not only thanked the USG for this equipment, but also personally thanked the President for his friendship to St. Lucia and for providing previous training opportunities, vehicles, and uniforms - a refreshing outpouring of gratitude from one of our host countries.

COMMENT

18. (C) This trip was a strong building block in U.S.-St. Lucia relations. The Ambassador made strong steps toward an Article 98 agreement, discussed the development of a TIFA and Science and Technology agreement, and focused on U.S. investments with a variety of government ministers. Finally, thanks and praises for the United States filled the presentation of the biodiversity grant and bomb technician equipment donation, without any of the usual requests for more assistance or allusions that the United States is not doing enough to support the Caribbean. Following Sir John Compton's death, these early signs from the new PM indicate he is looking to continue Compton's legacy of being one of the USG's closest friends in the region.

OURISMAN